**Professional Writing Resources**

[Purdue University's Online Writing Lab](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/) is an excellent **general reference tool**. It includes sections on **English as a Second Language** and **Job Search Writing**.

If **grammar**, **style** and **punctuation** aren’t your strong suits, this is a simple guide to common questions: [Grammar Girl: Quick & Dirty Tips for Better Writing](http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/). The [University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Writer’s Handbook](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/index.html) has an [Editing Checklist](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CommonErrors.html).

**Strive to avoid gendered pronouns.** Avoid using “congressmen” or “chairman” as generic terms applying to both sexes. “Members of Congress,” “representatives” and “chair” are good substitutes. Purdue OWL has developed a page on [Stereotypes and Biased Language](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/using_appropriate_language/stereotypes_and_biased_language.html).

**Emails** to faculty and advisors and, more importantly, to your superiors at your internship, should read as if written by someone ready to enter the professional work force. BSOS students will benefit from Purdue OWL’s [Email Etiquette](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/email_etiquette.html) and [Email Etiquette for Students](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/email_etiquette_for_students.html) guides.

**Capitalization** – See Purdue OWL’s “[A Little Help with Capitals](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/help_with_capitals.html)” page, which covers many of the errors we see in student papers. AP has a [Political Style Guide](https://www.ap.org/press-releases/2014/ap-distributes-style-guide-for-u.s.-midterm-elections) and a [Parties and Philosophies](https://writingexplained.org/ap-style/ap-style-political-parties-and-philosophies) page which cover most capitalization issues related to branches of government, political parties, or interest groups.

**Cover Letter Tips** – Are you applying to a company, agency, foundation, or department? If you don’t know which term to use for you target organization, learn the [proper terminology for different sectors](http://www.slideshare.net/Devex/avoid-offending-potentialemployerswithyourcoverletter/6-0Avoid_offending_hiring_managers_using).

**Proofreading** - There is an excellent “[How to Proofread](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Proofreading.html)” page in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Writer's Handbook. Do it out loud! It is a good practice before sending an email to a superior. If you start good proofreading practices as an undergraduate, you’ll be one step ahead of the competition when applying to graduate school or your first professional job.

**Professional Writing Classes** - Most are outlined [here](https://english.umd.edu/writing-programs/professional-writing). Of particular interest to students interested in Maryland politics is this [two course series](http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/undergraduate/internships/current/mga-0), ENGL381/HONR386A: MGA Legislative Seminar and ENG388M/HONR386: Writing Internship: Maryland General Assembly Pre-Professional Writing Internship.

Bernard Marr’s “[The 10 Biggest Grammar Mistakes That Make Smart People Look Stupid](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-biggest-grammar-mistakes-make-smart-people-look-stupid-marr)” includes many **common errors**. Read it and appear smarter! [Oxford Dictionaries](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/commonly-confused-words) has a video and list of commonly confused words.

**Human Help -** If you prefer personal assistance, the Writing Center takes [appointments](https://english.umd.edu/writing-programs/writing-center).

All links are operational as of 9/14/2020.